REPORT OF THE SUB NATIONAL CLIMATE CAFÉ HELD ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2019 AT MILLS VIEW HOTEL, KISUMU

A group photo of the participants at the sub national climate café at Mills View Hotel, Kisumu.

1.0 Introduction

The Network of Climate Journalists of the Greater Horn of Africa (NECJOGHA) held a sub-national climate café at Mills View Hotel, Kisumu on Wednesday, September 25, 2019. The cafe was attended by 39 participants drawn from the three Western Kenya counties of Kisumu, Siaya and Homa Bay. Among the participants were media practitioners from radio, newspapers and television; two officials from the Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD), agricultural officials, members of civil society organizations, farmers and fishermen. The purpose of the event was to avail platform to discuss how best to improve the communication of climate information by scientists, media and sector specifc experts and users of climate information.

2.0 Presentations

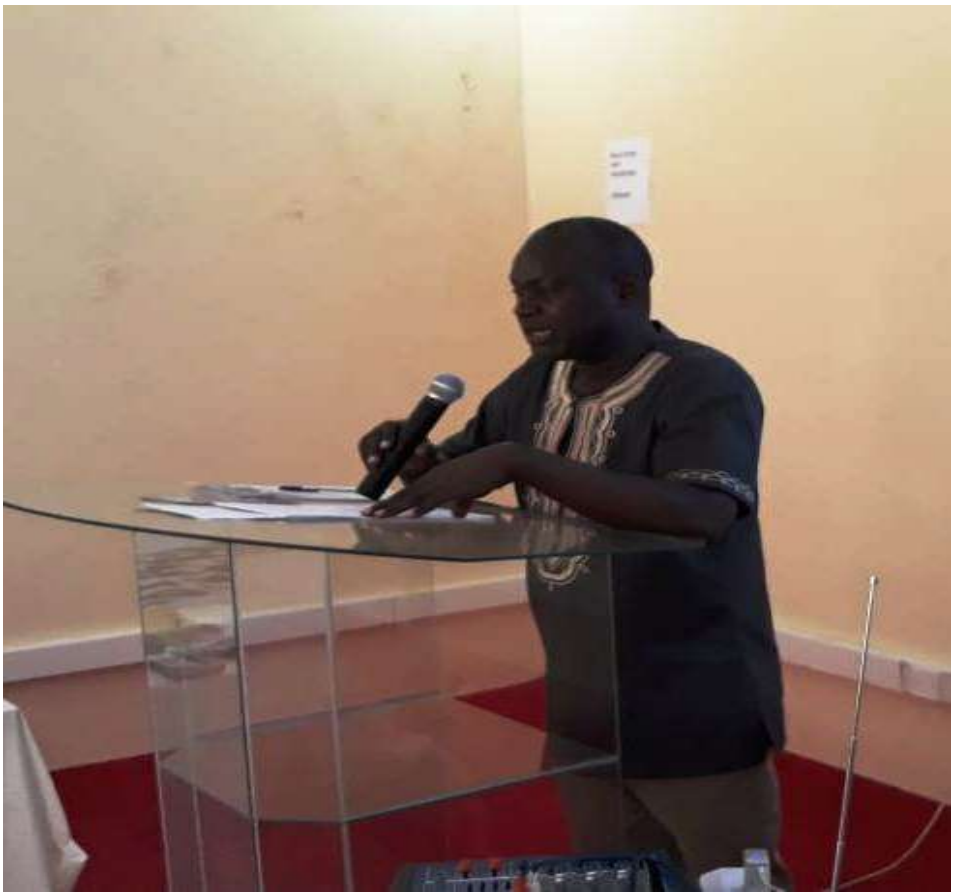
There were four presentations made at the climate café. One was to create understanding among participants about NECJOGHA climate cafes plus a brief on the country WhatsApp Mentoring groups and the website. A second presentation was on the review of the June to August (JJA) season and the seasonal forecast for the October to December (OND) season. Another presentation was on the HIGHWAY marine project by KMD. A county official of the KMD made a presentation on the local weather forecast for OND for Homa Bay.

2.1. Welcome remarks and brief of NECJOGHA, climate cafes and Country WhatsApp mentoring groups

This presentation was made by the NECJOGHA, Research, Documentation and Publication Officer, Andrew Kaggwa who explained what NECJOGHA does in the Greater Horn of Africa. On climate cafes, Kaggwa told the participants that a climate café is a creation of NECJOGHA as a mechanism of disseminating climate information to the public. He emphasized that what happens in a climate café is not training or a workshop but a conversation around issues to do with climate.

He noted that the relationship between the media and scientists is sometimes not good with each side accusing the other of frustrating it. He noted that the media usually accuses the scientists of not only being hard to approach but using hard terms which are not easily understood. Kaggwa, therefore said climate cafes are a way of creating a rapport between the scientists who generate climate information, the users who are mainly farmers, fishermen and pastoralists as well as the media and civil society who disseminate the climate information

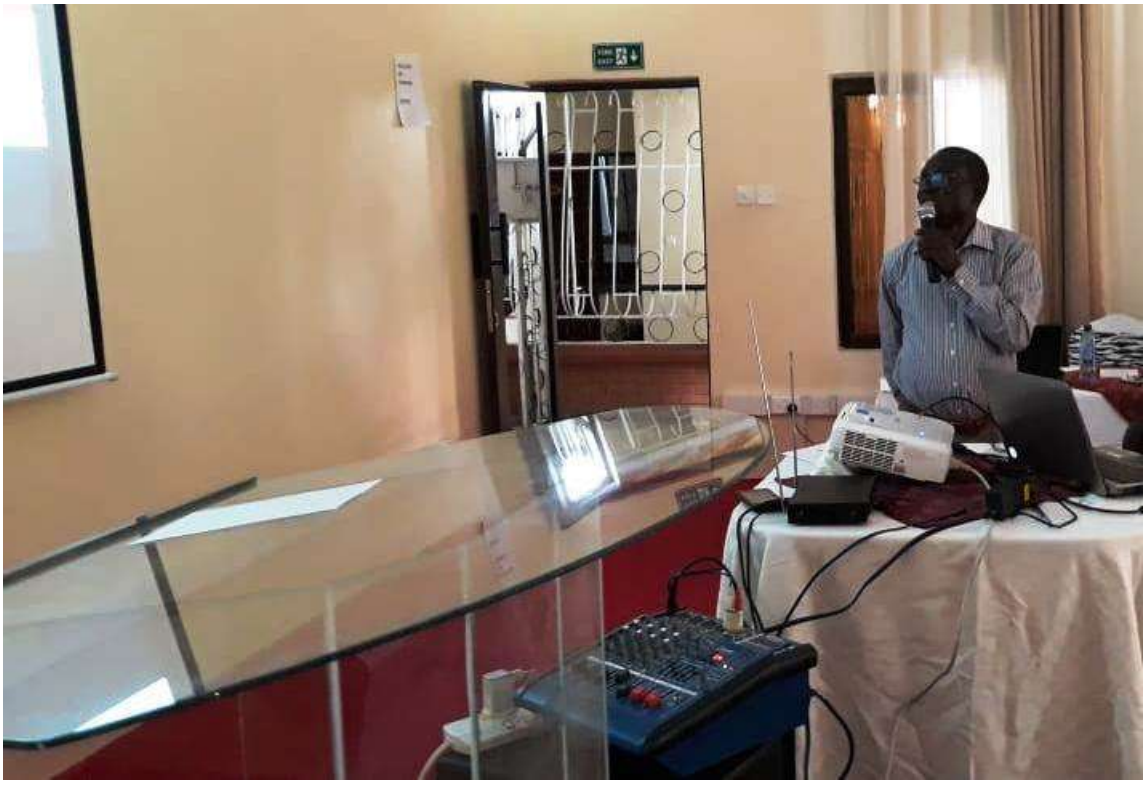
Kaggwa also briefed participants that NECJOGHA had started three WhatsApp groups for each country of East Africa namely Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda which are under the present Weather wise project which NECJOGHA is implementing. He said these groups help to develop story ideas and generate stories. He encouraged members to sign to and launch the Kenya group because the Uganda and Tanzania groups are already up and running.



Kaggwa giving a welcome remark and presentation on what NECJOGHA Is, climate cafes and NECJOGHA WhatsApp groups.

2.2 Review of the June July August and the seasonal forecast for the October November December

This presentation was made by Paul Oloo County, Director of Meteorological Service Kisumu County.



Paul Oloo, Kisumu County Director of Meteorological Service KMD, makes a presentation.

2.2.1 Review of the JJA season

Paul gave a review of the March to May (MAM) season which he said was affected by a series of tropical cyclones. He however, said that for the June to August (JJA) season the western part of Kenya received significant rainfall.Oloo explained that more or less there was a dipole over the Indian Ocean with the south being warmer in comparison to the northern part He stressed that the ocean that affects our rainfall most is the Indian Ocean.

Giving a global perspective Oloo said positive Sea Surface Temperature Anomalies (SSTAs) persisted in the central and eastern tropical Pacific, consistent with El Nino conditions; Positive SSTAs dominated in the North Pacific; Horseshoe/tripole-like SSTA pattern was observed in the North Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean, SSTAs were positive in the west and negative in the east.

He said for JJA most of Kisumu county received normal to above normal rainfall although neighbouring counties like Kericho and Kakamega had suppressed rainfall.

2.2.2. The October-November-December (OND) 2019

Oloo noted that the October-November-December (OND) 2019 “Short-Rains” forecast is based on:

The prevailing and the expected evolution of Sea Surface Temperature Anomalies (SSTAs) over the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans and also the Synoptic, Mesoscale and local factors that affect the climate of Kenya. He explained that these factors were assessed using various tools including -- Ocean-atmosphere models,

-- Statistical models,
-- Satellite derived information and
-- Expert interpretation
He explained that Neutral El Nino condition is still present in the Eastern and Central Pacific Ocean and expected to persist into the early 2020. The prevailing positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) was also considered. The configuration in the Indian Oceans is currently favorable for good seasonal rainfall in various parts of the country especially over the eastern sector. The predicted onset, cessation and distribution of rainfall were derived from statistical analysis of past years, which exhibited similar characteristics to the current year

2.2.3 Rainfall Outlook for OND 2019 for Kisumu

On the rainfall outlook for OND 2019 for Kisumu County Oloo said it will likely be near-normal to slightly above normal (slightly enhanced) rainfall.
Start of rainy season (onset): Continues from September 2019
End of rainy season (cessation): 3rd to 4th week December 2019
Dry spells are likely to be less than 7 days especially in October and November 2019.

2.3. Rainfall Outlook for OND 2019 for Homa Bay

Another KMD presentation was made by Vitalis Cosugu, the KMD County Director for Homa Bay. He started with giving a summary of the seasonal outlook and said that the warmer than average Equatorial sea-surface temperatures (SSTs) prevailed over the western Indian Ocean (adjacent to the Kenyan coastline), and cooler than average SSTs over Eastern Indian Ocean (adjacent to Indonesia). The cooler and warmer than average SSTs also prevailed across the East-Central Pacific Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean respectively.

The ocean conditions over the Indian Ocean is conducive for good rainfall over much of Kenya. The expected evolution of the Oceans and associated weather systems will lead to near-average tending to above-average (enhanced) rainfall during October to December 2019 short rains season in Homa Bay County. Rainfall will be well distributed both in time and space during the onset month of October and peak month of November, while depressed rainfall will prevail for most of December 2019 in Homa Bay County. The County is expected to continue receiving rainfall during the first week of October from the month of September. The rains are likely end during the third to fourth week of December.

2.3.1 Seasonal Forecast for Homa Bay County by climatic zone

Forecast for Suba/Mbita and Homa Bay/ Kendu Bay climatic zones 1 and 4 (includes Mbita, Rusinga Island, Mfangano Island, Nyandhiwa, Sindo, Homa Bay Town, Kendu Bay, Karachuonyo etc.)
Start of rainy season (onset): Continues from September 2019
End of rainy season (cessation): 16th to 24th December 2019

Probable volume of rainfall: 150 – 350 mm – Near average to slightly more than the average rainfall received in this season over the past 30 years. Distribution of rainfall over time: Rainfall is likely to occur regularly with occasional heavy showers especially in October and November. Rainfall is expected to be well distributed both in time and space during the onset month of October and peak month of November, while depressed rainfall will prevail for most of December.

3.0 Panel discussion

There was a panel discussion from representatives of the media, agriculture extension services, civil society, farmers and fishermen on how they access, and use climate information, challenges involved and suggestion on how they can improve on the dissemination of climate information.

Richard Ojijo (far right) of Dunga Beach Management Unit makes a presentation as part of the panel.

3.1 Media

The media presentation was made by Bernard Maranga of KBC. He said that -Climate journalist always work with climate scientists for instance meteorological officers, agricultural officers, farmers and fisher folk

"Our production requires that we visit farmers, fishermen and pastoralists to get real stories. A good story contains all stake holders' e.g. a farmer, agricultural experts and meteorological officers etc.," Maranga said.

He emphasized that stories and programmes need to be well researched and informative to meet audience needs. Maranga said that journalists need to be factual when reporting to avoid distortion of information and with experience and continuous interaction with climate scientists, journalists are trusted more. To the climate scientists Maranga said, need to network with stakeholders and keep contacts.

On the challenges the media faces in the dissemination of climate information, he said the main one was the technical language they use e.g. above normal, Ocean dipole and others. So you need to interact with them more and understand their language. He also said that for good stories a journalist needs to travel but some areas are so remote and journalists require more facilitation

3.2 Agricultural extension services

The panel presentation for agriculural extension was made by Harrison Fundi of Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA) in Siaya County. He said that AFA was established by an Act of Parliament and a as a directorate they are mainly concerned with the promotion of fibre crops especially cotton and sisal. He said they also make sure that all stakeholders follow the set regulations. These include the cotton ginners, spinners and all those involvede in the cotton cycle.

Fundi said they work closely with farmers through farmers' groups to ensure that cotton farming goes up. He said climate information is crucial in agriculture because most of the agriculture in Kenya is rain fed agriculture. He said that its for this rerason that they keep in close touch with KMD so as to get rainfall forecasts to pass on to the farmers. Fundi empasized that they have to get all updates made by KMD on the prevailing weather conditions and pass them on to the farmers.

3.3 Farmer

Tobias Muga, a sweet potato farmer from Homa Bay County represented Kabondo CooperativeSociety which is involved in production and processing of sweet potatoes with over 3,000 members. He said they have collection centres through which they send down climate information down to their members who are the farmers.

Muga emphasized that climate information is very vital to their operations because as a developing country many farmers ibn Kenya practice rainfed agriculture. He gave an

example of last year when the rains failed and they produced very little. He therefore said they need timely climate information to carry out their sweet potato growing activities.

He said that through working with an NGO, Anglican Development Services (ADS) they were able to sponsor for them a program on Radio Namlolwe which would disseminate climate information to their farmers. Muga said farmers are one of the biggest consumers of climate information because they need it to plan their activities for instance they need to know when the rains are starting to do early planting.

3.4 Civil society

Laban Otieno Owiga of Green Belt Movement informed the participants that their organization operates in the three counties of Kisumu, Homa Bay and Siaya. He said they work closely with three ministries of agriculture, forestry and environment to pass on the necessary information to farmers to help them plan their activities. He said they pass on information to the farmers through barazas and have also got people they call champions who they use to disseminate information.

He said that because their organisation is involved with tree planting they need weather information to informa farmers when to make nursery beds and when to transpants at the onset of the rain. He said last year they had a lot of rainfall but it came so early and most farmers were caught unaware and didn't prepare their land early enough.

He however noted that some of the information they get from KMD is not so general but they would like to get specificinformation for their farmers who for instance plant trees. He also called on the media and KMD to put their organisation on their mailing lists so that they get climate information in time.

3.5 Fisherman

The panel presentation for fishermen was made by Ojijo Richard from the Dunga Beach Management Unit (BMU). Ojijo said that weather information is very important to fishermen and other lake users to avoid accidents on the water. He explained that originally fishermen were using indigenous knowledge to predict weather but because of climate change some of this has now changed and they need to depend on forecast hence need for modern equipment.

He however, said its important for them to get the climate information on time. He gave an example that it would be of no value for the marine forecast for the night to come out at 6pm when the fishermen went out to the lake at 4pm.

3.6 Reactions to panel presentations

- Media should give more space or airtime to climate news
- There should be more climate information in community newspapers and radios which area accessed by farmers.
- Sometimes some of the climate information given in the media is very brief and does not expound on important issues.

- There should be a translation of the term 'climate change' in vernacular to help local understand it.
- There is need to give specific climate information to farmers to enable them plan their activities well.
- Meteorologists should consider indigenous knowledge when making forecasts.
- Local radios around Lake Victoria should get time to air marine forecasts for their audience.
- The different groups and cooperatives that are involved in the growing of different crops should liaise with the Ministry of Agriculture so as they can access experts to advise their farmers.

4.0 Way forward

After the presentations there was a general discussion on the improvement on the dissemination of climate information in Kenya generally and western Kenya in particular.

- A WhatsApp group is formed to continue the climate discussion even after the end of the NECJOGHA Wiser project which is sponsoring climate cafes.
- Since most media houses are commercial, government must pay for the dissemination of climate information as a service.
- There should be an engagement between media owners and the generators of climate information to discuss better ways of disseminating climate information.
- Civil society organisations concerned with climate and related sectors should consider organising regular workshops to empower the media.
- The media needs to get back feedback from their listeners, viewers and readers on the climate information they disseminate and send it back to the generators of climate information.
- Met agencies should release user friendly information to help the population on their adaptation to climate change.
- Climate change should be one of the subjects or topics taught at higher institutions of learning like universities.
- Climate information should be easily accessible to the population.
- Need to invest in upper air observation equipment to improve on the accuracy of the forecasts.